



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: September 15, 2017
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Enrollment of School-age Children Who Have Been Displaced by Hurricanes and Other Natural Disasters**

The Virginia Department of Education is receiving inquiries concerning the enrollment of school-age children who have been displaced by the recent hurricanes. This memorandum provides immediate guidance for the enrollment of these students when they are unable to produce the required documentation when displaced by a natural disaster.

Enrollment

Please treat these families and students as though they are homeless, as provided in the federal McKinney-Vento Act, unless permanent housing is initially obtained, such as renting an apartment. School divisions are required to enroll students experiencing homelessness immediately and coordinate the provision of services to these students with relevant local social services agencies. Be reminded that school divisions are prohibited by state law from charging tuition to a student experiencing homelessness. You are encouraged to work with your division liaison for students experiencing homelessness for technical assistance. If classroom capacity becomes an issue, you are encouraged to cooperate with neighboring school divisions to accommodate these students.

Transcripts and Grade Placement

Schools should use their best judgment when determining grade placement for students who do not have scholastic records and may not ever be able to replace them.

Immunizations, Physical Examinations, and Student Health

Students experiencing homelessness cannot be excluded from school because the requisite birth records, immunization records, or documentation of health examinations cannot be obtained.

If a certified copy of a birth certificate cannot be obtained, the person enrolling the child should submit an affidavit providing the child's age and explaining the inability to provide a copy of the birth record. (§ 22.1-3-1 (A) of the *Code of Virginia*)

If documentation of a physical examination cannot be provided, the person enrolling the child should submit "an affidavit so stating and also indicating that, to the best of his knowledge, such pupil is in good health and free from any communicable or contagious disease," and the division liaison shall assist in obtaining an examination, either through the local health department or other clinic or physician's office. (§ 22.1-270 (A) of

the *Code of Virginia*)

If immunization records cannot be provided, the student should be referred to the division liaison to assist with obtaining the immunizations or records of immunizations. (§ 22.1-271.2 (C) of the *Code of Virginia*)

It is also recommended that the school divisions use their school nurses to address any additional health problems and or chronic illnesses that might impact the student's educational experience. School nurses can also provide community resources to meet the medical needs and to assist the students and their families during this transitional time.

Record-keeping

Please keep records of those students who are enrolling in your division as a result of displacement from a natural disaster. As such, your division should ensure that the data submitted on the Student Record Collection for these students includes the proper Initial Primary Nighttime Residence Code. If the student is unaccompanied (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian), the unaccompanied homeless youth flag also should be activated. Additionally, use your division as the responsible division; do not use "out-of-state" codes to ensure the student is included in average daily membership.

Sources of Financial Support

The McKinney-Vento Act requires states to ensure that "...each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths." Tuition may not be charged for these students. As stated above, these students should be coded in your student record system as homeless. By doing so, they will be counted in your division's average daily membership (ADM). This means that you will receive the state share of payments, and you will be required to provide the local share of costs just as you would for any other student in ADM.

You should also be aware that the provisions of Title I, Part A permit you to use such funds as a source of financial support for the needs of these students using the reservation of funds for students experiencing homelessness. As we approach the deadline for spending or obligating your federal 2015-16 grant awards (September 30, 2017), please do not lose the opportunity to direct those funds toward services for these students. This includes the use of your central office allocations, not just your school-based funds.

School Nutrition

Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for free meals through the federal school meal programs.

Additional Resources

The U.S. Department of Education has established a webpage for the recent weather events, including resources for providing social and emotional support for such students, at: <https://www.ed.gov/hurricane-help>



Should your division homeless liaison need assistance, they should contact Project HOPE-Virginia, the office of the state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth in Virginia, at 757-221-4002 or 877-455-3412 (*Toll Free in Virginia only*), email: homlss@wm.edu

Should your division need help with VDOE data collections contact resultshelp@doe.virginia.gov.

Please contact the Office of Policy at (804) 225-2092, or by email at policy@doe.virginia.gov, if you have any additional questions.

Thank you for your tireless efforts to assist these families who have been devastated by natural disasters.

SRS/ZLR/bj

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